

In tough times, a good brochure is vital to help retailers attract shoppers. Shaun Davis takes a look at two of the latest, from Vale Furnishers and Ercol

# Make a positive impression

The past 18 months in furniture have, like our planet, been turbulent. Retailers have reacted in very different ways – three different ways, in fact.

The first, sadly, was to shut their doors without putting up a fight. The second, more common reaction has been to stick it out by reviewing internal operations, staffing, pricing, supply and other overheads – a commonsense approach that would apply to almost every other industry.

However, the third response is more positive. Not only have they bid to increase efficiency, but have stuck two fingers up and moved forward to generate new business. One such retailer is Vale Furnishers in Surrey.

Vale has just released its latest



Shaun Davis

brochure, and launched a mailing campaign to coincide with advertising. At first glance, the brochure does not give away its identity as a furniture collection – in fact, it looks more like literature from a high-end German car manufacturer.

Open the first page and, though still no furniture, the company name gives the game away. What follows is a personal introduction with photographs of the Vale teams. Though this is not an uncommon approach in brochure design, it has been well executed and gives the impression that these guys like what they do and would welcome you to their store as a customer.

The rest of the brochure is a collection of ranges from different

suppliers, mixed with interesting and thoughtful items such as advice on colour, lighting and some money-off vouchers too!

There are many things I like about this brochure. Its large format feels substantial and memorable – this was not cheap to produce. More important is the success in making the brochure flow – though the ranges portrayed are from different manufacturers, the pictures selected have very similar treatment and colouring. The uncluttered and themed layout further enhances the effect.

A nod of the hat for Vale – some of the collections were better represented than in the manufacturers' own brochures and full credit must go to the company for creating a mood, a feel, even an aspiration.

With such positive marketing and attention to its customers in what have been tough times – it's no wonder Vale is a multiple winner of the Furniture Retailer of the Year award.

I got a different message from the new Ercol brochure. First impressions of a nice cover were spoilt by the flutter of inserts falling out on to the floor. Additions or modifications are to be expected, but these gave me three messages – all different.

The brochure is A4 landscape format and begins well with an introduction and a strong photograph. However, as you

delve further, disappointment sets in. The lack of fluidity and a strange selection of bright colours is not improved by a large number of cut-out photographs, which would have been more at home on a price list.

It is a shame, as there are some great photographs, particularly close-ups, but the message that many furniture manufacturers need to take on board is that the brochure is a total concept, not individual pages or photographs.

Hidden in this confusion is the dining table you are looking for, but the brochure almost discourages the reader from looking more closely.

Two of the inserts that fell out were for the Ercolani collection. Again, there is nice photography and the motif (two graphics of chair joint details) is exciting. But what is not clear is the difference between Ercol and Ercolani. It is obviously a diffusion collection, in this case called Roma, but the literature does nothing to explain its background.

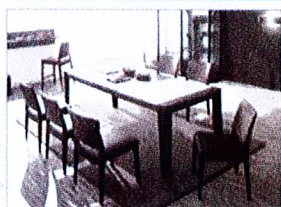
Failing to connect company with customer is a common problem in our industry. Highly respected manufacturers such as Ercol have needed to raise their game in recent years and we all want them to succeed. However, whether you are contemporary or traditional, there's no excuse for your brochure design to be stuck in the past.

Shaun Davies is Media Lounge director

## calligaris

This contemporary design – Calligaris offers what's new in the world of modern furniture.

With a collection of furniture, from a modern and elegant dining table to a contemporary sofa, Calligaris offers a complete solution for your home.



Calligaris



Above and left: Vale's brochure flows

Right: Ercol has bright colours on its pages

